



**Damaged preserves
recover with rains**

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County of San Diego - Parks and Open Space Program

Contributing to the County of San Diego Strategic Plan Environment Initiative

"Promote natural resource management strategies that ensure environmental preservation, quality of life, and economic development"

**County Trails
Program Approved**

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SPRING RAINS REPLENISH SAN DIEGO'S NATURAL BEAUTY



Winter and spring rains have arrived in plenty bringing changes to the landscape Countywide. MSCP staff and Parks Division staff are conducting rare plant surveys as plants can be easily identified by their flowers.

Cacti found in San Diego County Parks bloom with the spring rains and the Anza Borrego Desert has received substantially more rainfall this year than in the past. More than 12 inches have fallen this season in an area that usually receives between 0-3 inches per year. Cacti are well adapted for sparse rains with a waterproof outer layer and a pleated shape which allows the plants to expand to absorb as much water as possible for the dry months ahead.

Areas of East County have been in bloom with vast fields of yellow and golden wildflowers. San Diego's most common native wildflowers include the California poppy, wart stemmed ceanothus, and lupine species.

The federally endangered San Diego Fairy Shrimp populate vernal pools after they are filled by seasonal rains. This MSCP protected species is endemic to San Diego County and is found in Ramona, Otay Mesa and at the Miramar Marine Base. As Vernal Pools evaporate, egg cases are deposited and remain dormant in the soil until the land is flooded again. Vernal Pools may support more than 100 native species throughout the year. Many waterborne insects and birds rely on this valued habitat and native wildflowers will appear after the pools evaporate.



Wildflowers blooming in Henshaw, between Palomar Mountain and the Anza Borrego Desert.



Fishhook cactus in bloom in the Anza Borrego Desert



This Vernal Pool in Ramona may support as many as 100 native species throughout the year.



GOING WITH THE FLOW: A Tour of the Otay River Watershed

Trish Boaz, County of San Diego Environmental Resource Manager

The Otay River Watershed Management Plan (WMP) Policy Committee members hosted a tour of the Otay River Watershed on Friday, January 21, 2005. County Supervisor Greg Cox, San Diego Port Chairman William Hall and Imperial Beach Councilmember Mayda Winter attended the Tour along with members of the Otay River WMP Executive Committee, Working Group-Project Team and private citizens.



Participants enjoy a spectacular view of the Otay River Valley

The tour's first stop was at an overlook off of Heritage Road that provided the group with a bird's eye view of the Otay River Valley westward from the Coors Amphitheater to the ocean. Tom Oberbauer, Chief of the MSCP, provided the group with a general overview of the Otay River Watershed.

As the group viewed a new stormwater detention basin located off of Olympic Parkway between Brandywine Avenue and Heritage Road, Khosro Aminpour, Civil Engineer for the City of Chula Vista provided the group with an update on the City's water quality and watershed protection principles and policies.

Back on the bus and heading east, Kim Kilkenny, Executive Vice President of the Otay Ranch Company, provided the group with an update on the latest developments in Otay Ranch. As the bus wound its way further along State Route 94, Tom Oberbauer provided information regarding Jamul Creek and its potential for flooding during heavy rains, the Quino checkerspot butterfly and also pointed out Honey Springs Ranch, land recently purchased by the California Department of Fish and Game as an open space reserve.

The group was greeted by the beautiful landscape along Skyline Truck Trail and viewed the ranchettes built along the rural route in Deerhorn and Lawson valleys. As noon approached, the group made its way to Otay Lakes County Park and enjoyed box lunches while listening to informative presentations. Bob Collins, of the City of San Diego Water Department, provided information regarding the City's Otay Reservoir. Janaye Byergo, of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), provided the group with history and an update of the Otay Wilderness Area designated by the President in 1999, as well as information regarding BLM land management practices.

Lynne Christenson, San Diego County's Historian, provided the group with a rare and interesting glimpse into prehistoric and historic life of the Otay River Watershed. Back in the present, the group re-boarded the bus for a trip westward to the Otay Valley Regional Park (OVRP). John Willett, President of the Otay Valley Regional Park Citizens' Advisory Committee, assisted by Wayne Dickey, shared his experiences in the OVRP such as befriending a bobcat family and providing support and a new life for one of the previously homeless persons that resided in the park.



Participants learning the water cycle of the Otay Reservoir

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BOULDER OAKS PRESERVE RECOVERS AFTER FIRES



Engelmann Oaks two years after the Cedar Fire

Boulder oaks as described by its name, is a large block (approximately 1,250 acres) of oak woodland and chaparral habitat. A large percentage of the oaks are Engelmann oak (*Quercus engelmannii*), a species that is predominantly confined to San Diego County. Other habitats in this preserve include mesa lands with vernal pools, Freshwater Marsh and Seep as well as Riparian habitats.

This area was badly burned by the 2003 fires has exhibited new growth with green vegetation and wildflowers. Unlike the El Nino's of 1997-98 which released an outburst of rainfall all at once, this season's record-setting precipitation came slowly, over a longer period of time. Many fire-damaged preserves greatly benefited from this years rainfall.



A full reservoir at Boulder Oaks Preserve



Otay Watershed Tour Continued from Page 2

With the sun setting, the group headed to the City of Imperial Beach, landing at the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge where Vickie Touchstone of the Refuge explained the renderings of future projects proposed in the vicinity. Hank Levien, Director of Public Works for the City of Imperial Beach, gave a presentation on the City's efforts to address water quality and stormwater runoff issues.

Boarding the bus for the last time, the group headed back to the starting point of the full day of activities, with a better understanding of the history, diversity and value of the watershed and



The Otay Valley Regional Park at Beyer Boulevard

confident that all those involved in developing the Otay River Watershed Management Plan would have the best interests of the watershed in mind as they work to preserve, protect and ensure the viability of the Otay River watershed. Thank you to all that participated in the January 21, 2005 Tour:

Theresa Acerro, Aspen Environmental Group, Bureau of Land Management, California Department of Fish and Game, California Native Plant Society, City of Chula Vista, City of Imperial Beach, City of San Diego, County of San Diego, EDAW, Environmental Health Coalition, Nancy Hughes, McMillin Communities, Gale and Michael Moriarity, Otay Land Company, Otay Ranch Company, Otay Valley Regional Park, San Diego Audubon Society, San Diego Bay Keeper, San Diego National Wildlife Refuge, San Diego Union-Tribune, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, State Coastal Conservancy, Sierra Club, Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association, Unified Port of San Diego, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.





NEWS FROM THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

by Brian Albright, Assistant Director



Wednesday, January 12, 2005, was a historical day for the County of San Diego and for the Department of Parks and Recreation.

The County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the adoption of the County Trails Program (CTP). The CTP has been a dream of many for years and we are excited to start working on implementing a plan that will give San Diego County one of the finest trail systems in the country, provide numerous benefits to our local economy, and unique recreation opportunities to San Diego residents and visitors.

The economic and health benefits of trails are endless. Trails provide a beautiful natural setting for exercise whether it be walking or riding. Best of all, enjoying County park trails requires no monthly membership fee, year contract or personal trainer. Trails also function as an instrument to preserve the beautiful natural surroundings of our Southern California open space. Trails are a desirable amenity that can contribute to the economic vitality of any community, provide congestion relief, and potential property appreciation.

The CTP will enable the County to expand its existing trail network from 300 miles to more than 1,000 miles. The CTP will also provide the opportunity to develop a non-motorized, multi-use transportation and recreation trails system and promote the many benefits of trails while walking, hiking, horseback riding or mountain biking throughout the unincorporated County.

The primary focus of the program is connectivity. Trails will link community to community via a non-motorized trail system. They will also connect communities to the regional trails, other government agency's trails, community and regional parks, schools, libraries and other public facilities.

The program identifies nine regional trails that will serve as the "backbone" for the trails system. In addition, 18 communities in the unincorporated County have developed community trails plans that are contained in the planning and implementing document for the CTP.

Over one million residents in the County of San Diego enjoy hiking and riding on County trails. Our goal with the CTP is to provide unique recreation and education trail experiences for these 1 million residents and to become a national destination for all trail enthusiasts.

We hope you can join us in celebrating National Trails Day (NTD) on June 4, 2005. For more information about the CTP and NTD special events, please visit www.sdparks.org.





COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO EAST COUNTY MSCP PLAN UPDATE

The County of San Diego has initiated its planning effort for the East County MSCP Plan. Visit our new website for more information at:
http://dplu-mscp.sdcountry.ca.gov/pub_out/eastcountyplan.html
 or call Kimberly Zuppiger, at (858) 694-3499.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

April 9th Saturday, 9am - noon

I Love A Clean San Diego's Creek To Bay Cleanup

To register call 1-800-237-BLUE or e-mail spevents@ilacsd.org. For more information visit: <http://ilacsd.org/>

April 23 Saturday, 10am

Fire Ecology Hike at Heise Park, 4945 Heise Park Road, Julian

It has been over a year since fire engulfed much of San Diego County, and Heise Park was closed for several months due to fire damage. See the results of restoration efforts and the new growth that has taken place. Programs subject to change without notice. Check at the Ranger Station.

May 1 Sunday, 10am - 5pm

EarthFair 2005 in Balboa Park

EarthFair 2005 will be the 16th anniversary. Each year, the EarthFair draws around 60,000 visitors. Produced entirely by volunteers, EarthFair features more than 200 exhibitors, special Health and Technology theme areas, a Food Pavilion, a special Kids' Area, five entertainment venues, and a Children's Earth Parade (*All Species Welcome*). For more information visit: http://www.earthdayweb.org/SDEW_EarthFair.html

May 28 Saturday, 10am

Fire Ecology Hike at Heise Park, 4945 Heise Park Road, Julian

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Editor: Trish Boaz; **Contributors:** Thomas Oberbauer, Kimberly Zuppiger, Adam Wagschal, Rick Sakow and Bethany Yamanaka of Planning and Land Use; and Brian Albright and Amy Harbert of Parks and Recreation



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